(b) if so, what is its new name;

(c) whether the company has introduced a new version of gun;

(d) whether India has placed orders for purchase of new guns; and

(e) if so, the number of guns to be purchased?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Bofors as a company does not exist any more to the best of our knowledge and another company called M/s. SWS Defence has taken over Bofors Company.

(c) to (e) M/s. SWS Defence have offered their Towed Gun, alongwith other vendors, for trial evaluation in India. No orders have been placed for the purchase of this gun on any company.

Compatibility of MiG's with growing needs of the IAF

5125. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even after the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament finally called for phasing out of the ageing MiG-21 fighters, the Air Force Chief reaffirmed that the Air Force remain safe, secure, strong and formidable force with its MIG fleet;

(b) if so, whether the Air Force has re-examined the safety and strike force of the MiG and propose to upgrade and make the MIG fleet a technically sound and safe fighter aircraft compatible with the growing needs; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Although MiG-21 is an aging aircraft, it remains fully airworthy consequent to regular maintenance checks and servicing procedure. Hence, MiG-21 will remain in the Air Force for some more

time till it is gradually phased out, after its Total Technical Life is fully exploited.

The Air Force has already re-examined the safety and strike capability of the MIG force in consultation with the Original Equipment Manufacturers and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. A total of 125 MIG-21 Bis aircraft have been planned to be upgraded. The indigenised production of MIG-21 Bis aircraft continued till 1989. Taking average life of 35 years, the majority of these aircraft have got considerable residual life left. All technical problems as experienced during the exploitation of this fleet have been addressed. MIG-21 Bis Upgraded thus would be a contemporary fighter comparable with the best in its class. The other Air Forces of the world have also been flying aircraft of similar vintage.

Proposal for non-lapsable defence fund

5126. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has sent a proposal to the Finance Ministry for a two year non-lapsing defence fund; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) A proposal has been forwarded to Ministry of Finance to evolve a mechanism to allow carry forward of unused amount of one financial year, under the Capital outlay, to the next financial year.

AN-32 Aircraft hit by Pak Fire

5127. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an Air Force AN-32 transport aircraft was hit when Pakistani forces opened fire in Kargil sector in the last week of February, 2002;